

THE CRISIS OF BRITISH CAPITALISM, THE SOVIET UNION, AND THE LEFT IN THE LABOUR PARTY

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In the last period, the deepening and expanding crisis of British capitalism has been shaking not just the Conservatives and the Liberals, but the Labour Party too. Labour being the wing of the capitalist system in the workers' movement.

The crisis of British capitalism is not about "saving the value of the pound" as we are told. It is not even about the economy or finances. It goes deep, destabilising the Labour Party, making it hesitant. For Labour is the place where the decline in the power of British imperialism ends up, and concentrates.

The decline in the power of British imperialism started in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Now it affects Britain¹. As keen as any other to be free of the capitalist chains, the British proletariat wants more answers from its Labour leaders. Behind the turmoil in the Trade Unions and the Labour Party, the worsening crisis of British capitalism worsens the crisis in the Labour leadership.

The British Communist Party has split² because it is affected too. One communist sector supports the Soviet Union whilst another opposes it - but neither side has a correct programme. The British Communist Party has no perspective as such; but the perspective of the British proletariat is from Labour to Communism. It follows therefore that, for the British Communist Party, the task is to learn how to wait, and accompany Labour to Communism.

¹ In 1977, the phrase 'Britain' could generally mean 'all the British Isles', Northern Ireland included.

² In 1977, a *New Communist Party (NCP)* led by Sid French broke from the traditional Communist Party which had been called **CPGB** up to then. Transformed by that break, the CPGB changed its name to become the *Communist Party of Britain (CPB)*. Those who refused the break continued to call themselves CPGB. They produce the journal *Weekly Worker* nowadays, whilst the CPB remained connected with the *Morning Star*. Editorial note, 2017.

On hearing this, the communist comrades will be offended and feel negated, but they will have to discuss this in the end. The British Communist Party is a small Party. It has a limited influence and authority because the key historic events of the past found it unprepared and without programme.

Forward to the Socialist Federation of the British Isles:

One cannot propose for Britain the same as for Italy or Greece. The situations in these countries are all different, and there is no doubt about this. What they have all in common, however, is the same capitalist crisis. And beyond their particularisms and languages, their national characteristics move within relations of forces that are worldwide.

It is the role of the Communists to encourage the Labour left with a programme of 'statisation' (state-ownership) and economic planning. It is also their role to propose *the Socialist Federation of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland*, with a view to the eventual unification of all these areas.

We live in a stage of fierce differentiation, racial, regional, national, individual, etc. If the discovery of oil in Scotland leads to several parts of Britain wanting the revenues, there can be no planning. The resolution of this problem demands a more advanced economic and cultural development - but capitalism is incapable of it. Like the divisions in Ireland, Scottish oil raises not just economic, but social and cultural questions. Britain cannot plan if its regions fight each other and separate. Note that the top capitalists have an interest in those divisions. This is why they constantly encourage the hatred of centralisation.

No Labour Left can ignore Ireland, and succeed:

The political demand for 'devolution' is like the demand for regionalisation. It is a retreat. The revolt that animates the ordinary campaigners for devolution is not necessarily a retreat on their part; these people are positively revolted by the domination of a few capitalists at the top. What is negative however, is their *demand* for devolution. Devolution splits countries. It divides populations. It turns the region, the

nationality, the language and other particularisms into places of refuge. And this is an impasse.

Britain faces an impasse in this matter as much as in all the other problems of the country. It is capitalism that makes the problems intractable. This intractability has not suddenly arisen from Trade Unions, from elections or from the discovery of oil wells³. It has come with the dry wells of the capitalist system which no longer yield anything. The workers' movement needs to step in with programmes and policies. Take Ireland: What do the various political parties propose for Ireland? They go no further than 'more' or 'less' liberty for Ireland! The Labour left, the Trotskyist groups and the left-wing Communists must discuss together a programme for the development of Ireland. A programme for Ireland is part and parcel of the programme for the development of the left in the Labour Party.

The Trotskyist groups and the Communists must intervene with programmes, policies and campaigns of agitation for Ireland, with the aim of consciously influencing the Labour left. The more they do this, the more influence they will have, and the better their results will be.

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This does not mean that the Mandelists⁴ and other Trotskyist groups, the Communist left, the Labour left and the Posadists must refrain from building themselves. Quite the reverse! They can all grow, and they must grow in their own fields of political activity. Only, they must seek to have an influence where the masses are centralised, which is the Labour Party. They must not aim at growing at the expense of the Labour Party, or try to dispute numbers from it. Mind that they will not be able to do this anyway; they will fail if they try. There is not the historic time to start doing this. There are not even the immediate conditions.

³ In Scotland.

⁴ Mandelists: followers of Ernest Mandel of the Trotskyist Fourth International who had some importance in the Labour Party in 1977.

A big spanner was thrown in the works of human progress when the Communist Party (CPGB) decided to 'rectify' Marxism. This led it to drop Marxism and adopt "*the British Road to Socialism*". As if a special road to Socialism was on offer in Britain! But there is no such special road in Britain. Britain never was a special case in history. It is Marxism that always was, and remains, the method to interpret the process in Britain.

Why is there such an uproar and agitation in Britain at the present time? This is not properly discussed in the Left. And it is not discussed at all in the Labour Party and the Communists. Those who discuss this matter speak in terms of yet another capitalist crisis. No! The crisis in Britain is not another 'normal' crisis of the system. It is true that the crisis of capitalism goes through phases, but what is happening now is epoch-changing.

When British imperialism was thrown out of its colonies, it lost essential pillars of economic and social stability. After WW2, it was the world Socialist Revolution that gave courage to the various *National Liberation Movements*. It led to the creation of new Workers States. It threw British imperialism out of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

For the Democratic Socialist Republic of Britain!

The 'multinationals' do not come from a deliberate decision on the part of capital to reorganise itself in order to compete and accumulate. No! The multinationals emerged because capital had no choice. Various economic pressures caused the multinationals to form. They did not initiate the pressures that caused them to reorganise internally. They reacted to those pressures. Multinational capital could no longer expand, and so it had no choice but to concentrate. It is the world revolution that stopped capital expanding beyond a certain point. Thrown out from most countries, capital was only allowed to re-enter on certain terms. From that point onwards, capital could only survive by concentrating. The Britain we know today comes from all this.

Britain did not lose its colonies. The masses of the world threw it out - Britain and its monarchy.

Monarchy must be brought down and a Socialist Britain made. We recommend the following slogans: "*Forward to a Socialist Britain*" – hence "*Forward to Socialist Democracy*" and "*Forward to the Democratic Socialist Republic of Britain*".

One must never demand 'democracy' in the abstract because abstract democracy is the monarchy and the queen that we have now. The idea of democracy, and the demand for it, must always specify what kind of democracy one is after. We are after the kind of democracy that has a concrete and physical form. It is called socialist democracy.

Right from its inception, the Soviet Union never stopped making progress :

The British Communist Party must explain that Communism is where humanity is going. Communism is the natural conclusion of the objective progression of history. If the process leading to Communism was delayed upon its way, it is because the division of society into classes forced it to make a detour.

The advent of social classes retarded progress, but it did not stop it. For over and above the class divisions, society created the economy, science and technology. Human intelligence and discoveries never stopped growing. This very growth led to the class conflict, but science, intelligence and the economy took off immeasurably faster than the class conflict. So much so that we have Marxism now, and we have learnt how to make the Workers State.

The Workers State is the material expression of all the progress that humanity has made and concentrated in Marxism. You could say that the Workers State is human progress materialised. This is why we say that the Workers State is Marxism materialised. Marxism materialised is not Karl Marx, his statues or even his texts. Marxism materialised is the Workers State! This is so even if Biermann⁵ cannot sing in East Germany; it is so even as we

⁵ **Karl Wolf Bierman**: born 1936 in West Germany. Became a performer and singer. Went to live in East Germany where he was a 'dissident' of the Workers State. In 1989, he performed in East Germany during the 'Wende' that toppled the East German

are told that there is no democracy in East Germany.

We uphold the right to criticise the Workers State, but any criticism of the Workers State must serve the cause of human progress. Many are those who measure the Workers State in light of what it was under Stalin; but what about the Workers State of today (1977) that supports Angola? Biermann cannot sing, Medvedev, Solzhenitsyn⁶ and others cannot speak - but have science, technology, the economy or society collapsed in the Soviet Union? They have not. The opposite is the case. They never stopped progressing in the USSR, and vigorously so. Since its inception, the Soviet Workers State never stopped improving economically, technologically and scientifically. And on the most important plane of the social relations, why, it has made improvements even greater than technologically, scientifically and economically. For it is helping humanity to free itself in Ethiopia, in Angola, in Mozambique. What kind of people are those who do not see this?

Defend the Workers State, assess it properly:

Communist comrades, comrades of the Communist left (a rather moderate one), the fact that Medvedev was not allowed to give a funeral oration does not measure the worth of the Soviet Union. You must assess the Workers State as a whole. In the Soviet Workers State, some dissidents cannot speak, but the ordinary workers can! For the Soviet workers and Trade Unions do speak; they speak through the actions of their government.

government. In 1999, he supported NATO's bombing of Kosovo. In 2003, he supported the Western invasion of Iraq.

⁶ **Roy Medvedev**, born 1925 in Georgia. Russian political writer. Wrote '*Let History Judge*'. Sought a reformist version of Communism. Considered himself harassed by Leonid Brezhnev. Never mentioned the support the USSR was giving to the Liberation Movements in the world. Became a consultant for Mikhail Gorbachev.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: 1918-2008. Ukrainian-Russian novelist and essayist. Wrote '*Goulag Archipelago*'. Following Glasnost, Soviet archival documents were opened. These showed that the name 'Goulag' referred to different things. It could be a labour camp, a labour colony or another form of detention. The Gulags were certainly many, but they often operated only for a brief part of their existence. The documents showed also that the Gulags had been intended to populate the remote parts of the USSR. Most people came out of the Goulags alive. Best behaved inmates could be released early. There were not the death rates or the number of detainees indicated by the literary sources available for scholars during the Cold War era. On their release, some individuals were granted a piece of land in the vicinity of where they had been held.

These Editorial notes are based on Wikipedia.

When their government defends the *National Liberation Movements* in the world, the ordinary Soviet workers have spoken. This is beyond compare with the songs of dissident Biermann. Communist comrades, if you do not discuss in this way, you cannot measure the progress that history is really making!

**True democracy
can only be Soviet democracy**

We do demand the right to *Soviet Democracy* in the Soviet Union and the other Workers States, but this is not what Medvedev, Solzhenitsyn and Biermann are calling for. True democracy will return to the Soviet Union when it grants to all the revolutionary tendencies the right to exist, the right to function and the right to intervene in the construction of the Workers State. That will be Socialist democracy! It will not be the abstract democracy that the dissidents demand. True democracy is Socialist-Soviet democracy.

Soviet democracy means that, in the construction of Socialism, absolutely everyone has the right to intervene. When this operates, Soviet democracy becomes the actual tool of social development. It becomes a physical and scientific tool. When the Party bases itself on Soviet democracy, it too becomes a scientific tool and its programme can only be scientific. Finished the time of the road-map programme of the past. The new programme is the compass showing the way to the Workers State. The Bolshevik Party was such a tool; and the Soviet Union has remained such a tool, after all, as we can see by the way it supports Angola. In today's conditions, the Soviet Union – i.e. the Workers State – is the paramount and most necessary beacon of science itself.

Humanity can do without knowing all about Venus or Mars, but it cannot do without the conquests of the mind. The most elevated conquests of the mind lie in discernment, confidence, audacity and resolve. It is Marxism that encapsulates these. Marxism is the most complete source of confidence because it lends discernment. And discernment, in its turn, develops the ability to speak, to discuss and to conduct polemics. Polemics is

not the same as put-downs and points-scoring. It compares views to find out what is best. Lenin, Trotsky and the Bolsheviks behaved in this way. This is Soviet democracy. This is the Soviet democracy that needs to return to the Soviet Union.

Soviet democracy is not 'pluralism'.

It is Marxism:

The aim of Soviet democracy is to have the USSR's leadership supporting the world revolution. This cannot be done without all the revolutionary tendencies having the right to speak in the Soviet Union. You recognise a revolutionary tendency by the support it gives to the world revolution. No revolutionary tendency wants to harm the Workers State. All the revolutionary tendencies must have the right to speak in the Workers States.

Biermann, Solzhenitsyn and Medvedev denounce the Soviet Union for its lack of 'democracy' and 'pluralism'. But what do they mean by that? What do they seek? They never refer to the socialist progress of the Soviet Union, or of Angola. They want 'more democracy' and 'more pluralism' to have more rights for themselves - i.e. the right to oppose the Workers State. We denounce them! We defend the Workers State and we stand against them! We defend the Workers State like medical practitioners defend their patients' lives. Biermann, Solzhenitsyn and Medvedev want to kill the patient. We have our own criticisms of the Workers State, but our motive is to improve it. We want the Soviet Union not only alive, but returned to complete health and fulfilling its immense potential!

The return of the Soviet Workers State to complete health can only happen on a proletarian basis. This demands full democracy in the Soviet Trade Unions. Alongside the initiatives of the USSR in the world, the Soviet Trade Unions must elaborate their own views and make their own pronouncements. The world needs to see the Soviet workers speaking! The world must hear them addressing the masses of North America, openly, as the Trade Unions of the Soviet Union. The world must see them functioning as Trade Unions, in a Workers State.

The Soviet Trade Union Centre must address publicly the

proletariat of the world. The world masses need to hear it call for the end of capitalism! Is there a greater form of 'democracy' and 'pluralism' than that? When the proletariat of the Workers State intervenes in this way, you no longer have 'democracy' or 'pluralism'. You have Marxism. When the Workers State functions fully, it is Marxism.

Support the development of the Labour left:

It is the duty of the British Communists to discuss in this way. They must condemn the pro-dissident shouts coming from most of the Trotskyist groups, as well as from a large layer in the Labour left and many in the Communists themselves. What draws all these people together is their objection to Soviet democracy. Their petit-bourgeois 'democratic' outlook causes them to part company with the Socialist Revolution.

The pro-dissident Trotskyists, Communists and others on the general left testify to what Marxism means by 'idealism'. These people have not investigated *dialectical materialism* or they have not wished to do so. We say to them: What do the dissidents want? What do they ask for? Do they want the right, in the USSR, to be heard defending the downtrodden of the world? Do they insist on being heard opposing world imperialism? None of these things! And so, what other rights do they want?

The only thing we hear from the dissidents is that they want "the right to speak". Well then, but to say what? The democratic right which they demand does not consist in defending oppressed or exploited others. What democracy is that then? Obviously, it is democracy for them. But who are they? What do they stand for? They do not propose any Soviet advancement, only their own. They parade importantly in front of cameras, but their admirers are small coteries. Their behaviour resembles that of one who masturbates in the absence of ideas, to stop the further penetration of rational thinking.

These matters need to be discussed, and in the way which we do here. Our stance against the dissidents has been almost completely rejected, but we remain confident that it is correct and will be vindicated. We know that idealism leads to failure

and abandonment. In the social upheavals and transformations to come, the idealism of those in the Labour right-wings and the right-wing Labour governments will cause them to fail. What will eventually prevail, in the left, is the use of the dialectical method of thinking. This is so because dialectical materialism is the only way to understand anything and organise successfully.

We reiterate that the main task is to support the development of the Labour left. This calls for much reasoning and many explanations. The explanations which we give ourselves, in Britain, must aim at showing others how to use dialectical materialism. That method opens up logically and naturally onto the dialectical and materialist programme of State ownership, production planning, workers' control, the abolition of the monarchy and the Socialist Republic.

Self determination versus the Socialist Federation:

There is no doubt that the territorial unification of the British Isles will eventually happen. The Federation of the British Isles is the logical pathway to it. Capitalism is entirely incapable of this. The only basis upon which to reach this aim is through a socialist programme.

The Posadists defend the principle of self-determination in the Federation. They insist on it being respected. This principle however, must be defended as part of the progress of the Federation. If it brings retrogression and backwardness to the Federation, it must be resisted. There is no value in going along with acts of self-determination which block the overall economic, social or political progress of the whole. These questions demand political vision. The building of the Federation of the British Isles will demand, from its leaders, the ability to rise above the strict confines of particular cultures, languages, regions, provinces, nations and countries.

The overall interests of the Federation will not allow for every particular and specific interest to be dealt with separately from the others. Most Communist and Labour comrades see this matter differently. There is a need to show to them that, whilst the leaders of the Federation must discuss flexibly, they must

also preserve the united instrument of leadership wanted to guarantee the progress in the whole Federation. History has demonstrated that this is the way to deal with this.

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